

Sociology 133a: Queering Gender, Gendering Bodies
Brandeis University
Summer 2009

Instructor: Alison Better
Class Meetings: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 11:15-1:45
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description

One way sociologists understand the world is through the identification and examination of identity categories. These categories aid in our readings of the worlds we inhabit and the people we encounter. In this course, we will challenge our sociological understandings of sex categories, sexualities and genders. To this end, we will examine ways in which categories of gender have been created, maintained and contested in society. We will attempt to recognize moments where the boundaries between male and female have the potential to become blurred or flexible. Our broad goal for this semester is to understand the structure and utility of gender categories and to examine the current and future potentials of the social organization of sex and gender.

Course Readings

(available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library)

Bornstein, Kate. 1998. *My Gender Workbook*. New York: Routledge. **(KB)**

Halberstam, Judith. 1998. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press. **(JH)**

Lorber, Judith. 1994. *Paradoxes of Gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press. **(JL)**

Rupp, Leila J. and Verta Taylor. 2003. *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **(RT)**

All other course readings are available on LATTE.

Course Requirements

Honest effort, enthusiastic curiosity, and work reflective of thoughtful and thorough familiarity with readings and course material will be expected. Close and attentive reading of all course texts **prior to** the day they will be discussed (as indicated in the syllabus) is essential to your successful learning in this class.

Attendance and Participation:

Regular attendance and active participation in class are each vital to your successful learning. They will also make the course more interesting for all of us. Please plan to attend every class and to be on time. Class will begin promptly at 11:15am. Please be on time out of respect for me and your fellow classmates.

Class participation is required. This is not a lecture class but primarily a discussion seminar based on your careful reading and preparation for class. I expect everyone to participate actively in class discussion and for you to work with me to create an environment where everyone can safely and comfortably express their views. Additionally, I encourage you to talk with me about class materials during office hours, send related information to the class via the class list and Latte forums, and otherwise creatively engage with the course material. I conceive of class participation broadly and will provide a variety of opportunities to facilitate your engagement in this class.

Discussion Leading: Once during the semester you will be expected to lead class discussions about a particular reading or set of readings. You will sign up for the class of your choice on Latte. The schedule of student discussion leaders will be sent by email after class during week one based on student choices. As discussion leaders you will be expected to state the main points of the reading, explain with examples how the author supports the key points and raise several thought provoking questions for class discussion. You may also want to prepare a brief handout with a summary of the reading and your discussion questions. Discussion leaders should briefly meet with me or send me an email about their plans by noon on the day before the class they are leading.

Written Assignments: Three times during the semester you will be writing a 4-6 page paper where you will respond to a question presented and integrate reflections, synthesis, and critiques of the readings and how they apply to the course materials and everyday life. Response paper assignments will be handed out in class and are also posted to the course Latte page.

Response paper #1: Assigned July 7, Due July 13
Response paper #2: Assigned July 14, Due July 21
Response paper #3: Assigned July 23, Due July 30

Final Paper:

One (10-12 page) final paper will be required for this course.

You will develop a research question that explores some aspect of the intersections between genders, sexualities, and bodies. You will choose one of two options:

- (a) Explore this question using only library research from scholarly books and peer-reviewed journals or
- (b) Explore this question using both content analysis relevant to your case study and library research from scholarly books and peer-reviewed journals.

Your final paper will incorporate theories and materials from the course with your findings from your library research (and content analysis, if chosen) on your chosen question.

The paper will be due Thursday August 6 at the beginning of class.

No late papers will be accepted.

Policies and Logistics

Final course grades are based on your class attendance and participation (15%), discussion leading (10%), response papers (15% each), and final paper (30%). All written assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class.

Papers (hard copies, not emailed) are due to me at the beginning of class on the dates listed. Late papers will be penalized for each 24 hours after the due date that the assignment is turned in. All extensions require prior notification and approval. Please feel free to discuss any problems with me as they arise.

Please note: The use of laptop computers during class requires prior notification and approval. If you need to use your laptop to take notes during class please discuss this with me.

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University's policies on academic integrity. If you have questions about academic integrity, see the student handbook, Rights and Responsibilities.

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of an accommodation, see me as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting an accommodation, contact Beth Rodgers-Kay at Undergraduate Academic Affairs (x 63470, brodgers@brandeis.edu). Accommodation requires documentation and cannot be granted retroactively.

If your student records do not correspond to your gender identity, or if you use a name other than what is listed in the official class records, please let me know.

July 6: Introductions and Overview

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. "Dualing Dualisms" *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books. **(LATTE)**

Grosz, Elizabeth. 1994. "Refiguring Bodies" in *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. **(LATTE)**

July 7: Gender: biological explanations

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. "Of Gender and Genitals" *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books. **(LATTE)**

Kessler, Suzanne. 1990. "The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants" *Signs* 16(1): 3-26. **(LATTE)**

Lorber, Judith. 1994. "Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology" **(JL: Chapter 2)**

July 9: Gender: social and structural explanations

West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender" *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125-151. **(LATTE)**

Lorber, Judith. 1994. "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender" **(JL: Chapter 1)**

Connell, R.W. 2005. "Gender as a Structure of Social Practice" in *Masculinities: Second Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press. **(LATTE)**

Rubin, Gayle. 1975. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Rayna R. Reiter (ed.) *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. New York: Monthly Review Press. **(LATTE)**

July 13: Blurring gender boundaries

Bornstein, Kate. 1998. *My Gender Workbook*. New York: Routledge. **(KB)**

Lucal, Betsy. 1999. "What It Means To Be Gendered Me: Life on the Boundaries of a Dichotomous Gender System" *Gender & Society* 13(6): 781-797. **(LATTE)**

*** Response Paper #1 Due**

July 14: Gendered bodies and sexualities

Lorber, Judith. 1994. "How Many Opposites: Gendered Sexuality" (**JL: Chapter 3**)

Koedt, Anne. 2000 [1973]. "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" in Baxandall and Gordon (Eds.) *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement*. New York: Basic Books. (**LATTE**)

Rich, Adrienne. 1980. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5(4): 631-660. (**LATTE**)

Connell, R.W. 2005. "Compulsory Heterosexuality for Men" in *Masculinities: Second Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (**LATTE**)

*** Response paper #2 assigned**

July 16: Bodies disrupting the binary

Lorber, Judith. 1994. "Men as Women and Women as Men: Disrupting Gender" (**JL: Chapter 4**)

Preves, Sharon E. 2001. "Sexing the Intersexed: An Analysis of Sociocultural Responses to Intersexuality" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 27(2):523-556. (**LATTE**)

Butler, Judith. 2004. "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality" in *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge. (**LATTE**)

Colapinto, John. 1997. "The True Story of John/Joan" *Rolling Stone*. (**LATTE**)

July 20: Transgender bodies

Selections from *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006) (**LATTE**)

Dozier, Raine. 2005. "Beards, Breasts, and Bodies: Doing Sex in a Gendered World" *Gender & Society* 19(3): 297-316. (**LATTE**)

Gagné, Patricia, Richard Tewksbury, and Deanna McGaughey. 1997. "Coming Out and Crossing Over: Identity Formation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community." *Gender & Society* 11(4):478-508. (**LATTE**)

July 21: Gender fluidity/ Paris is Burning

Muñoz, José Esteban. 1999. "Pedro Zamora's Real World" and "Performing Disidentity" in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. **(LATTE)**

Halberstam, Judith. 2005. "Unlosing Brandon" in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press. **(LATTE)**

Film: *Paris is Burning* (1991)

*** Response Paper #2 Due**

July 23: Examining Paris is Burning/ Drag

Butler, Judith. 1993. "Gender is Burning" in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. New York: Routledge. **(LATTE)**

hooks, bell. 1992. "Is Paris Burning?" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press. **(LATTE)**

Rupp, Leila J., and Verta Taylor. 2003. *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **(RT: Chapters 1-8)**

July 27: Drag

Rupp, Leila J., and Verta Taylor. 2003. *Drag Queens at the 801 Cabaret*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. **(RT: Chapters 9-16)**

Browne, Kath. 2007. "Drag Queens and Drab Dykes: Deploying and Deploring Femininities" in *Geographies of Sexualities: Theory, Practices, and Politics*. **(LATTE)**

July 28: Queering gender

Halberstam, Judith. 1998. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press. **(JH: Chapters 1, 5, 7)**

Film: *Venus Boyz* (2002)

July 30: Queering sociology

Seidman, Steven (Ed.). 1996. *Queer Theory/Sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers

*** Response Paper #3 Due**

August 3: Examining intersections

Sullivan, Nikki. 2003. "Queering 'Straight' Sex" in *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. (LATTE)

Jackson, Stevi. 2006. "Heterosexuality, Sexuality and Gender: Re-Thinking the Intersections" in *Intersections Between Feminist and Queer Theory* (LATTE)

Pringle, Rosemary. 1993. "Absolute Sex? Unpacking the Sexuality/Gender Relationship" in *Rethinking Sex*. (LATTE)

Thomas, Calvin. 2000. "Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality" in *Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality*. (LATTE)

August 4: Desires and pleasures

Hollibaugh, Amber. 1984. "Desire for the Future: Radical Hope in Passion and Pleasure" in *Pleasure and Danger*. (LATTE)

Attwood, Feona. 2006. "Sexed Up: Theorizing the Sexualization of Culture" *Sexualities* 9(1): 77-94. (LATTE)

Kimmel, Michael and Rebecca F. Plante. 2005. "The Gender of Desire: Sexual Fantasies of Women and Men" in *The Gender of Desire*. (LATTE)

August 6: Reflections

Ingraham, Chrys. 1996. "The Heterosexual Imaginary: Feminist Sociology and Theories of Gender" in Steven Seidman (Ed.) *Queer Theory/Sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Lorber, Judith. 1994. "Dismantling Noah's Ark: Gender and Equality" (JL: Chapter 12)

***Final Paper Due**